SUN TZU: ANCIENT THEORIES FOR A STRATEGY AGAINST ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

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ABSTRACT

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Sun Tzu's theories on war are timeless to both military and civilian strategists. His theories are as relevant today as they were in c. 500 B.C., especially in the context of our nation's war on Islamic extremism. The conflict we now find ourselves engaged in requires the innovative development of strategies which go beyond our past conventional thought. We must force ourselves to think of ways to defeat a new kind of enemy, one that is generally unseen, is driven ideologically, does not seek a set battle, and is like no other faced before. This project will highlight Sun Tzu's emphasis on the indirect approach to coerce or defeat ones' enemy. Then by using Sun Tzu's indirect approach as the analytical construct, the study assesses the current threat, Islamic extremism, by exploring its foundation, methods, goals and the conditions that allow the threat to flourish. Islamic extremism can best be characterized by a complex set of concentric rings: Al-Qaeda is at its center, with jihadist groups, sympathizers and the Muslim faithful comprising the outer elements. Finally, this project assesses the current *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* in light of Sun Tzu's indirect approach, offering policy considerations as possible improvements.

SUN TZU: ANCIENT THEORIES FOR A STRATEGY AGAINST ISLAMIC
EXTREMISM

Sun Tzu's theories on war are timeless in their utility to both military and civilian theorists. His theories, especially his concept of an indirect approach, are as relevant today as they were in c. 500 B.C., especially in the context of our nation's war on Islamic extremism. The conflict we now find ourselves engaged in requires the innovative development of theories which go beyond our past conventional strategies. We must force ourselves to think in ways of defeating a new kind of enemy, one that is generally unseen, is driven ideologically, does not seek a set battle, and is like no other faced before. This is where the ideas of Sun Tzu and his indirect approach to defeat ones' enemy can play a critical role for theorists and strategic planners.

This paper analyzes Sun Tzu's indirect approach to defeat ones' foe. Using Sun Tzu's maxims as a framework, the paper details the threat of Islamic extremism today, summarizes our current *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism,* and finally provides policy recommendations that apply an indirect approach to defeat Islamic extremism. The goal is to better understand the dynamic nature of Islamic extremism and identify areas to refocus current efforts and apply new policies through the indirect approach to overcome the current conflict.

> Now the valiant can fight; the cautious defend, and the wise counsel. Thus there
> is none whose talent is wasted.[1]

—Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu the Theorist

Little is known about Sun Tzu personally, but historians generally agree he lived around 500 B.C in the Kingdom of Wu (modern day China) and served as an advisor or general to the King of Wu.[2] Historians call this period the Warring States period due to the continuous fighting among rival feudal states as they strived to control their land and impose their rule over others. Feudal rulers were challenged to wage war while maintaining their material wealth in an agrarian society. As a result, there was great focus on better understanding how to more efficiently prosecute war without depleting ones' resources.[3]

This environment created the stimulus for Sun Tzu to develop and test his ideas, which later became his thirteen principles now known as his Art of War. These principles cover a broad spectrum from the tactical to the strategic realm. They were written in what many scholars consider a rambling prose that challenge the reader to discern key points from often vague statements, but once understood provide the reader with very precise statements on tactics and strategies. In order to understand these thirteen principles we must first understand

the importance Sun Tzu placed on warfare. His writings emphasize that "the art of war is of vital importance to the state. It is a matter of life and death, a road to safety or to ruin. Hence under no circumstances can it be neglected."[4] With this in mind, Sun Tzu also understood that there was a cost attributed to war that could threaten the survival of a kingdom if not undertaken with care. In his chapter "Waging War," Sun Tzu focuses on explaining why a protracted war is not only costly to the state in men and material, but it also may weaken the state to a degree that third parties not directly involved in the conflict may benefit.[5] With this framework of war as both vital and costly a closer look at his main concepts is useful.

Sun Tzu's core concepts are most easily described by organizing them into four main themes: Fundamentals; Command and Control; Important Strategies and Methods of Warfare; and Tactical Principles.[6] These four themes address both a direct and an indirect method to warfare, but Sun Tzu stressed that defeating your enemy indirectly was the greatest virtue because it husbanded your resources while attacking your foes' central strengths.

Three key fundamentals underlie Sun Tzu: one was that warfare was the greatest affair of state; the second stressed the criticality of accurate intelligence, analysis and planning; and the last focused on correctly setting strategic objectives and the methods to attain them. He believed "the highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans; next is to attack their alliances; next to attack their army; and the lowest is to attack their fortified cities." Whenever possible, victory should be achieved through diplomatic coercion, disrupting the enemy's alliances, thwarting plans, and frustrating its strategy.

Command and Control, the second theme, is focused on three elements: the commander; selecting, training and controlling the troops; and the psychology of Ch'i, or spirit. He stresses the commander must be well versed in the execution of war and must have the utmost trust and freedom of the ruler. The soldiers must be well-trained and motivated thus forming a unified element. To motivate and most effectively use his force Sun Tzu emphasized the concept of Ch'i, or spirit. Essentially, this involves ensuring a balance between multiple factors that make soldiers perform on an individual basis and motivate the army as a whole. Key to establishing a good command is understanding when your army is in "balance" and when it is not.

The development of strategies and the methods of warfare comprise the third theme. Here, the ideas of deception, terrain, strategic power, and the use of indirect tactics stand out. Sun Tzu stressed that by selecting the most advantageous terrain, or conversely avoiding the poorest terrain, in conjunction with deceiving the enemy of your true intentions will cause the enemy to make fatal errors thus giving a commander the strategic and tactical advantage. The ideas of strategic and indirect power relate to the effective use of all elements of power that a

state controls, including military, economic and diplomatic power, to influence the people's will and build alliances. Use of these powers alone or together in creative ways will give a commander the decisive advantage.

The final theme can be described in terms of the tactical principles the commander must understand. These include manipulating the enemy for your advantage, understanding your army's strength compared to that of your enemy, and choosing the correct formation for your army. [7]

These four themes when analyzed and applied today provide a construct for an indirect approach to war that is essential in our war against Islamic extremism. The construct is comprised of three elements: First, understanding your enemy--his strengths, weaknesses, goals and motivations; secondly, critically analyzing yourself--your strengths, weaknesses and current strategies; and finally having the flexibility to change or evolve current strategies based on the first two elements. This indirect construct will be applied through the remainder of this paper as we explore our understanding of the enemy, assess our own efforts and lastly, consider modifications to our current strategies in the war on terror.

> Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril[8]

> —Sun Tzu

Knowing Your Enemy:

The first element in the indirect approach construct involves gaining as much knowledge about your enemy as possible. For the policymakers and strategists in the current administration this has been a difficult process. Their oversimplification of the threat as being just Al-Qaeda in the first few years after September 11th, 2001 established an incorrect basis from which many of our current policies and strategies evolved. What are the realities of the threat we face today? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What motivates it? Why has it become such a formidable threat?

The threat faced today can best be described as Islamic extremism. This term, which appears broad in scope, is actually much more precise than the terms "Al Qaeda," "insurgents," and "terrorists" that many use today. It refers to a revitalized element of radical Islamic followers who want to use the religious-ideological tenets of Islam to justify violence around the world for multiple aims. They are disenfranchised men and women throughout the Muslim world who have been tested during the Russian war in Afghanistan as well as the conflicts in Chechnya and Bosnia where they fought holy wars against non-Muslims. These past experiences have

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helped them form international networks, create effective tactics against large military powers, establish funding and communication channels, and develop mature ideological/propagandist themes.

The goal of these radical elements is to overthrow the current governments and install strict Islamic theocracies, or caliphates, like we saw with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Some expand this to establishing a global caliphate as the end goal. They view western governments like the United States as enemies. Western governments who espouse democracy and political-religious separation are direct threats to the achievement of their goals. Their use of small-scale, but extremely violent attacks against countries like the U.S., Great Britain, Turkey and Spain serve multiple purposes. They hope to influence western public opinion to abandon current pursuits in the Middle East, to demonstrate to other Muslims that these large western powers can be damaged, to recruit and gain financing from their successful attacks, and to gain new converts throughout the world. The tactics they have used and are using now in Iraq are not new for smaller groups fighting larger enemies, but the difference is the grand scale in which they are operating and recruiting followers willing to sacrifice their lives for this warped version of Islam.

In a recent intercepted message from al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to al-Qaeda's new operational commander in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, these concepts are spelled out and can be extrapolated as ends, ways and means not just for al-Zarqawi in Iraq, but for the entire Islamic extremist movement. In the message al-Zawahiri details the plan for success in Iraq:

> It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt, and the neighboring states of the Peninsula and Iraq…If our intended goal in this stage is the establishment of a caliphate in the manner of the Prophet, then the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals: The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or amirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate…The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq. The fourth stage: the clash with Israel.[9]

Radical Islam or Islamic extremism is propagated by individuals who see the world through a pan-Islamic prism. They view the world in terms of religious unity as opposed to nationalistic unity. They believe that all Muslims should implement Islamic law (the sharia) and they believe the use of violence is justified.[10] In an effort to understand Islamic extremism, it is essential to understand how it developed organizationally, what motivates and sustains it, and where its weaknesses lie. Al-Qaeda was the spark that provided the organization, leadership

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and operational successes that formed a networked force of Islamic extremism. Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, was initially only a small cadre who pledged loyalty to bin Laden, but this cadre was supported by a much larger group of devoted followers. Their unique, and what has proven to be immensely successful, approach was their willingness to assist other jihadist groups throughout the world with organizational assistance, training and finances. They did this in five key ways:[11] (1) In nations with preexisting jihadist movements, al-Qaeda provided the necessary support to strengthen them (i.e., Uzbekistan); (2) In nations with no preexisting effective jihadist groups, it helped form them (i.e., Abu Sayaf in the Philippines); (3) Terrorists that worked independently, such as Khalid Shaikh Muhammad, obtained financial and logistical support and eventually were able to merge their loose networks into al-Qaeda; (4) Jihadist movements that were being weakened by successful counterterrorist actions were permitted to join al-Qaeda (i.e., Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad); and finally (5) Al-Qaeda provided funding and fighters to the Taliban to provide itself a safe sanctuary from which to operate.

This broad-based approach to supporting other jihadist groups formed the nexus for the growth of organized Islamic extremist movements of today. Despite being seriously affected by counterterrorist operations following the September 11, 2001 attacks, where al-Qaeda saw its sanctuary in Afghanistan destroyed, its key operational planners arrested or killed and its finances severely disrupted, it has successfully morphed from a:

> …unitary organization to something more akin to an ideology that is true to its name and original mission – 'the base of operation'. Al-Qaeda in essence has transformed itself from a bureaucratic entity that could be destroyed and an irregular army that could be defeated on the battlefield to the clearly less powerful, but nonetheless arguably more resilient, amorphous entity it is today…it is best described as a networked transnational constituency rather than a monolithic terrorist organization with an identifiable command and control apparatus that it once was.[12]

As a result, U.S. policy should take into consideration the fact that it probably will not matter whether Osama bin Laden is killed or captured. In fact, if he is, he may become a martyr for the cause, serving as another spark to the extremist movement like he was following September 11.

The Islamic extremist movement today can best be depicted by the relationship among four distinct, but not mutually exclusive, concentric circles:[13]

- *Al-Qaeda*. The smallest inner circle included terrorists from the original al-Qaeda organization. These are the remaining members from the pre-9/11 structure. They include Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawhiri, Jafar al-Tayar and

others who pledged their support to Osama bin Laden early on in the development of this group. Their numbers are most likely in the hundreds. Believed to be operating along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, they probably still exert some level of leadership, operational planning and vetting of future attacks, but the greater role is as spiritual figure heads for the broader extremist movement. Videotapes from Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri serve as rallying calls to the thousands of followers worldwide.

- *Jihadist Groups*. The second circle is larger and encompasses established insurgent or terrorist groups that have received support from al-Qaeda over the years. These groups are willing to perpetrate attacks around the world in the name of al-Qaeda and the greater objectives of the jihad. Their numbers are in the tens of thousands and include groups such as Abu Sayyaf (Phillipines), Jemaah Islamiya (Indonesia), Salafiya Jihadiya (Morocco), Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad (Iraq-Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group) and hundreds of other groups.

- *Jihadist Sympathizers*. The third circle is comprised of millions of sympathizers to the jihadist ideology. Some of these individuals may have previous terrorist training or have been a member of a formed group, but the majority serve as moral support for the cause. The spectrum of sympathizers ranges from former terrorists at one end to Muslims that may want to see changes in government among the pro-western Arab nations in the Middle East. They serve as a reservoir for possible recruits to the formal jihadist groups.

- *Followers of Islam* . The last circle or group is the larger Muslim population around the world. These are the religious followers of Islam and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. They number over one billion followers worldwide and only a small percentage are Arab. Indonesia has the largest number (196 million), followed by India (134 million), China (133 million), Pakistan (130 million) and others. Similarly, as with the Jihadist sympathizers, this group can be considered a pool of potential recruits for the extremist ideology, but more importantly it should be understood that they can also serve to decry the extremist movements and help to lessen the impact of the jihadist movements.
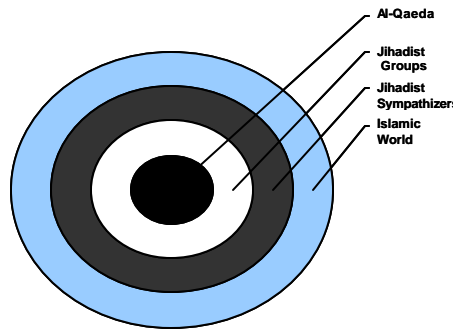
Al-Qaeda

Jihadist Groups

Jihadist Sympathizers

Islamic World

FIGURE 1. THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF JIHADISM[14]

Conditions, Processes and Catalytic Events

As denoted in the concentric circles discussed above, the radical elements of Islam are by far the minority out of the more than one billion followers of the faith. To stop the spread of Islamic extremism it is critical to understand the factors that have led to the upsurge in the number of followers. The factors can be organized into three broad categories: conditions, processes and catalytic events.[15]

Conditions are those factors that have a permanent or semi-permanent nature affecting individual lives. The essential condition in the Middle East is the religious bond Islam has on the people and the nation states. It defines not just their religious norms, but also their political norms. Many of the nations in the Middle East following the colonial period experimented with various government models, but most failed to deliver the economic benefits and political stability espoused by western governments. This failure resulted in the rise of what many scholars call the Islamist model – the concept that a strict adherence to Islam and its norms is the only answer.

Processes are those events that occur over a long period of time and that have a particular outcome or influence. They occur within the context of a region's conditions and can be accelerated by critical catalytic events. The current Palestinian-Israeli and Kashmir conflicts are processes.

Catalytic events are those events that are so dynamic they can drive significant changes in a region or country or belief in the most fundamental of ways. Examples are the Russian war in Afghanistan, the September 11 attacks by al-Qaeda and the current war in Iraq.

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Conditions	• Failed political and economic modes
	• Structural anti-Westernism
	• Decentralization of religious authority in Sunni Islam
Processes	• The Islamic resurgence
	• Arabization of the non-Arab Muslim world
	• External funding of religious fundamentalism/extremism
	• The convergence of Islamism and tribalism
	• Growth of radical Islamic networks
	• Emergence of the mass media
Catalytic Events	• The Iranian revolution
	• The Afghan war
	• The 1991 Gulf war
	• September 11 and the global war on terrorism
	• The Iraq war

FIGURE 2. SOURCES OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM[16]

Conditions

The single most defining condition that has molded the political, economic and social environment of the Arab world was the failure to successfully transition following the post-colonial period. These failed attempts resulted in corrupt, repressive and unrepresentative regimes. The end result was a large proportion of Arab people living in poor economic and social conditions that served to foster radical Islamic ideologies as an answer to their ills. Structural anti-Westernism is essentially the focusing of current frustrations, hate and discontent towards the United States and other western nations because they are seen as the reason for many of the current problems in the Arab world. It serves as an outlet for their frustrations and is often manipulated by various regimes to deflect criticism away from their own regimes. Another key condition is the vulnerability of Sunni Islam to be misinterpreted or manipulated for the purposes of extolling extremist beliefs. Sunni Islam is less structured and does not contain the elaborate religious hierarchy that the Shi'a sect maintains. Therefore, individuals like Osama bin Laden can dictate their own interpretations of the religion for their own purposes without being formally challenged by other Sunni clerics or leaders. Lastly, the unwillingness of moderate Muslims to confront or challenge the extremist ideologies is also a key condition. Despite some denunciations by Muslim religious and political leaders, they have been muted and not exploited to counter the radical teachings. One reason moderates have not spoken out strongly against terrorism is the bond of the Islamic religion that unites all Muslims, whether radical or moderate. It is a common bond shared against all non-Muslim nations.

Processes

Six critical processes were fueled by the above conditions starting with the growth of Islamic religious zealousness in the 1970's. The period was marked by a resurgence of strict religious interpretations of the Koran by both Sunni and Shi'a religious leaders. Muslim-led governments, such as Iran, also fanned the effort by enforcing: the separation of men and women, the strict wearing of Islamic clothes, adherence to dietary restrictions, and prosecution of anything considered non-Muslim. Moderate Muslims explained it as a refocusing on true religious precepts. In reality, it served to foster intolerance, political extremism and the move towards violence as a valid means to further the extremist cause.

In addition, during the 1970's the Muslim world began to see the process of Arabization begin to take place. The Arab-form, with its new strict interpretation of the Koran, began to be exported around the world. This included other Muslim nations, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, but it also was the beginning of a new radicalized movement in Western European nations like Great Britain. Nations found themselves being influenced, financially and politically, to incorporate these new radical interpretations of Islam into their political systems, thus leading to what we see today with influential, broad-based movements in nations that are fighting to remain secular.

Another major process with far-reaching consequences was the Saudi Arabian government's effort to fund and export the Wahhabi fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.[17] Through their funding of mosques, madrasas (Islamic religious schools), and aid relief throughout the world the end result has been an increase in the belief that the strict Wahhabi version of Islam is acceptable and correct. While funding of these efforts historically came directly from the Saudi government, private donors have expanded donations to support the spread of these ideals. The inadvertent result for the Saudi government has been the resurgence of extremist groups in their nation who consider the Saudi government a puppet of the Western powers, specifically the United States. The result has been multiple terrorist attacks on Western, but also Saudi interests over the last decade.

The Wahhabi teachings also coalesce well with the tribal make-up so central in the Middle East, resulting in the process of merging radical Islam with tribalism. The tribal framework provides a fertile underpinning for the acceptance and the expansion of the radical Wahhabi teachings. In remote locations, the Pakistan-Afghan and the Saudi-Yemeni border areas for example, the poor living conditions and tribal affiliations make the confluence of the two processes easy. Osama bin-Laden and many of the original al-Qaeda members (Khalid Sheikh

Mohammed and Ramzi Youseff) were products of such an environment, growing up amongst strong tribal conditions.

Another key process is the interconnected network of Muslim supporters. They include religious-based, humanitarian, educational and financial networks that allow for broad-based dissemination of radical Muslim ideals and also provide support for terrorist planning and operations. These networks are not solely focused within the Middle East or other Muslim nations. Key support nodes have been developed in Western Europe, Latin America and the United States. In fact, as was determined after the September 11 attacks, a great deal of the planning, funding and movement of terrorists was based from Germany and other European countries.

The final key process is the development of a networked mass media communication outlet to spread the radical beliefs. The explosion of media technology now allows the dissemination of the message to millions of households with satellite connectivity or through the Internet. The rise of Arab-based newspapers and television stations (Al-Jazeera) also serve as platforms to influence the masses and often warp the truth for the benefit of only a few extremists. The flexible and savvy use of this medium has served as a serious challenge to others who are attempting to counter the spread of these radical ideologies.

Catalytic Events

With the conditions and processes established there were several sparks, or catalytic events, that exponentially changed the environment. The first was the Iranian revolution in the late 1970's. It demonstrated to the world that a group of religious fundamentalists could overthrow a secular government, supported by the United States, with relative ease. This spawned multiple movements throughout the Middle East, such as Hezbollah in Lebannon, and demonstrated to other Shi'ite-based groups that violence did lead to intended results.

During the same period, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided another key spark. Again, it proved that a relatively small group of Muslim believers could defeat a large non-Muslim world power and later establish a theocracy-based government as the Taliban did. As important, it served to train a large number of religious zealots who would later return to their countries of origin where they provided expertise to the growing movements.

The 1991 Gulf War despite being a success for the United States and its coalition allies (including many Arab countries) widened the gap between religious zealots and their belief that the Saudi Royal Family and other Arab governments were pawns to the United States and had

strayed from Muslim traditions. This view was exploited, and it deepened the hatred directed toward secular Arab governments and Western European powers.

Finally, the most dramatic and momentum-changing event was the success of the September 11 attacks by al-Qaeda on U.S. soil. It once again proved that a small group of religious fundamentalists could attack at the very heart of the world's only superpower and have monumental affects worldwide. Public reaction to the attacks in the Arab world ranged from "the United States got what it deserved" to "it was a western conspiracy to blame Muslims and therefore provide the basis for further subjugation." The attacks also served to widen the rift between Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide and have been continually exacerbated by the general ignorance of each other's societies and religions. Diplomatic, social and economic policies focused on eradicating the terrorists were also misinterpreted as continued attempts by the West to attack the Muslim faith, widening the rift even further.

So, what is the threat we face? The threat is multi-faceted and extremely complex. Its evolution born from economic, political and social conditions over decades, now ignited and fueled by current events and fervent Islamic ideologues must be understood in its entirety. Policymakers have to acknowledge the complexity of the threat and develop strategies that attack the true roots of Islamic extremism--causal roots that can only be effectively defeated by utilizing an indirect approach encompassing all the elements of our power over the long-term.

> For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill.
> To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.[18]

—Sun Tzu

Understanding the Current Strategy

The second element to the indirect approach construct is critically assessing one's own strengths, weaknesses and strategies. Only by understanding the enemy in relation to these can realistic and effective strategies be developed and executed.

In the United States' Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) a range of strategy documents have been published in an effort to identify the threat, focus the government's energy and execute the solution successfully. These documents include the *National Security Strategy of the United States (2002)*, the *National Strategy for Homeland Security (2002),* the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (2003)*, and the *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism (2005)*. In addition, strategic plans for various government agencies attempt to integrate into the overarching goals of the GWOT.

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In the *National Security Strategy of the United States* (NSS), President Bush details a campaign against terrorism comprised of three essential elements: (1) Disrupting and destroying terrorist organizations; (2) Waging a war of ideas; and (3) Strengthening homeland security. He notes that these do not have to be executed sequentially, but that the cumulative effect of them over time will achieve success.[19]

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* written one year later is used to further refine the strategy:

> This combating terrorism strategy further elaborates on Section III of the National Security Strategy by expounding on our need to destroy terrorist organizations, win the "war of ideas," and strengthen America's security at home and abroad…the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism focuses on identifying and diffusing threats before they reach our borders…Ours is a strategy of direct and continuous action against terrorist groups, the cumulative effect of which will initially disrupt, over time degrade, and ultimately destroy the terrorist organizations.[20]

The strategy begins by describing the terrorist threat. It highlights the unique environment in which it operates and the changing nature of terrorism. The new global environment and the openness it has brought around the world provide terrorists greater opportunities and freedom of action to extol their teachings, fund, train and plan their attacks. It describes how terrorists operate in three separate operational realms: the state, regional and global realms. It also identifies an endstate for when victory will be achieved:

> Victory against terrorism will not occur as a single, defining moment… Victory, therefore, will be secured only as long as the United States and the international community maintain their vigilance and work tirelessly to prevent terrorists from inflicting horrors like those of September 11, 2001.[21]

The strategy articulates four goals with supporting objectives to attain the end (Figure 3). The four goals include: (1) Defeat Terrorists and Their Organizations; (2) Deny Sponsorship, Support and Sanctuary to Terrorists; (3) Diminish the Underlying Conditions that Terrorists Seek to Exploit; and (4) Defend U.S. Citizens and Interests at Home and Abroad.

Goal	Objectives
Defeat Terrorists and Their Organizations	• Identify terrorists and terrorist organizations • Locate terrorists and their organizations • Destroy terrorists and their organizations
Deny Sponsorship, Support and Sanctuary to Terrorists	• End the state sponsorship of terrorism • Establish an international standard for combating terrorism • Strengthen and sustain the international effort to fight terrorism • Interdict and disrupt material support for terrorists • Eliminate terrorist sanctuaries and havens
Diminish the Underlying Conditions that Terrorists Seek to Exploit	• Partner with international community to strengthen weak states • Win the war of ideas
Defend U.S. Citizens and Interests at Home and Abroad	• Implement the *National Security Strategy for Homeland Security* • Attain domain awareness • Ensure the integrity, reliability, and availability of critical physical and information-based infrastructures at home and abroad • Integrate measures to protect U.S. citizens abroad • Ensure an integrated incident management capability

FIGURE 3: COMBATING TERRORISM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At first glance, the strategy appears to be comprehensive and based on an understanding of the terrorist threat; it lays out a broad spectrum of direct and indirect ways to defeat terrorism at home and abroad. But, upon greater analysis, and looking at its execution since it was authored, a number of prominent problems become apparent that lessen its overall effectiveness:

- *The Threat.* The strategy attempts to broaden the definition of terrorists from earlier expertise gathered on groups like the Red Brigade in Germany, the IRA in Ireland and the Japanese Red Army in Japan, but it still fails to fully understand the religious-ideological underpinnings of the individuals that actively serve as terrorists or the multitudes that passively support and extol it. The strategy still focuses on the threat in terms of al-Qaeda, but not the historical processes and catalytic events that

spawned, nurtured and continues to strengthen what should be understood as Islamic extremism.

- *Direct Approach.* The strategy emphasizes that to win militarily will not suffice, but implementation of the strategy over the last few years has clearly focused on a military solution. The war in Afghanistan, border operations in Pakistan, the war in Iraq all demonstrated successes in capturing or killing terrorist operatives. Despite these costly military operations the extremist movement has survived and even prospered. This focus is based on the underlying misconception of just what the threat is. As the British discovered in Malaya in the 1950's, "The shooting side of the business is only 25% of the trouble and the other 75% lies in getting the people of this country behind us."[22]

- *Decision Cycles.* The acknowledgement must be made that the extremists are operating within our laborious governmental and international decision-making processes. They operate faster than the United States, the other partnered-nations and the many international organizations. They are networked and have the luxury of not being constrained by large bureaucracies, laws and international norms to limit their activities.[23]

- *Organizational Inefficiencies.* The strategy does not address the need for better coordination, planning and execution across all elements of the government and among international partners. It addresses the need to utilize diplomatic, economic, intelligence and law enforcement means, but it does not identify the need to improve the way these means are utilized. In an effort to better organize we have seen a number of new organizations emerge. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Homeland Security Council (HSC), the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (now the National Counterterrorism Center), and most recently the centralizing of all intelligence oversight under a Director of National Intelligence (DNI). But, little effort has been made to improve the overall coordination among these multiple agencies. Expanding this notion to the coordination efforts with our international partners and the inefficiencies and problems compound themselves. In testimony before the House International Relations Committee in 2005, terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman described the necessity to fix these inefficiencies:

Ideally, this policy would embrace several elements: including a clear strategy, a defined structure for implementing it, and a vision of inter-government agency cooperation, and the unified effort to guide it. It would necessitate building bridges and creating incentives to more effectively blend diplomacy, justice,

development, finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military capabilities along with untangling lines of authority, de-conflicting overlapping responsibilities and improving the ability to prioritize and synchronize interagency operations in a timely and efficient manner.[24]

- *War of Ideas.* Importantly, the strategy does identify the need to win the war of ideas as a stated objective. However, it fails to recognize that we will not win the war of ideas without a clearly articulated and unified communication strategy that defines the ends desired to win the battle of ideas, as well as a comprehensive plan utilizing all the means available. Public diplomacy efforts will need to be strengthened as one means to the end.

- *Priorities, Milestones and Performance Measures.* As shown, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* does an adequate job of defining goals and objectives, but it fails to prescribe priorities, milestones and performance measures. As a February 2004 Government Accounting Office report noted, "…while the strategies identify goals, subordinate objectives, and specific activities, they generally do not discuss or identify priorities, milestones, or performance measures – elements we consider to be desirable for evaluating progress, achieving results, and ensuring effective oversight."[25]

Thus, one able to gain the victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine.[26]

—Sun Tzu

Strategy Adjustments and New Initiatives for Combating Terrorism

The final, and often the most difficult, indirect approach construct is the vital need to overcome bureaucratic inertia and force changes in strategies based on a critical assessment of their performance in achieving the stated goals.

The United States' efforts, in coordination with its allies, in the GWOT, or more accurately against Islamic extremism, have resulted in significant successes since September 11, 2001. These results have led to key terrorist leaders being killed or captured, sanctuaries destroyed, finances seized, security at home and abroad strengthened, and international cooperation improved. However, now is the time to reassess our progress and realign our efforts so that our strategies and objectives are focused on the long-term objective of countering Islamic extremism. It must be clearly articulated and understood by all Americans and international partners that this may take ten to twenty years to accomplish. The following policy recommendations are offered as possible solutions:

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- *Refocus Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy.* One of the goals established in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* was to diminish the underlying conditions for terrorism. One objective for that goal was to win the war of ideas. This objective is correctly identified; however, execution to implement this part of the strategy has been poorly managed. First, a National Communications Strategy needs to be developed. This effort was initiated in 2002 when the National Security Council (NSC) created a Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee to assist with public diplomacy. The committee drafted a national communications strategy, but it was never implemented when the committee disbanded in 2003 and the plan was never coordinated. In 2003, The White House established an Office of Global Communications that was tasked to develop a communications strategy, but again at the time of this project, "the government does not yet have a public diplomacy communications strategy."[27] The criticality of developing a coherent, coordinated strategy cannot be understated in this war of ideas. "Despite U.S. efforts to better inform, engage, and influence foreign audiences, recent polling data show that anti-Americanism is spreading and deepening around the world."[28]

This is not to say nothing has been accomplished, but like many initiatives, this part of the strategy, which is so crucial to long-term success, has been moved out of focus. Positive developments such as the NSC's creation of the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordination Committee and their charter are to develop a communications strategy and coordinate its implementation. The Department of State also just formed a new bureau to integrate efforts because it has recognized that "the apparatus of public diplomacy at the State Department has proven inadequate, especially in the Arab and Muslim world…the system has become outmoded and lacks a cohesive corps of devoted messengers within the foreign and civil service."[29] This new bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs headed by Under Secretary Karen Hughes was tasked by President Bush to "lead the effort from the State Department, to identify and marshal all the communications and public diplomacy resources of our different agencies and provide leadership to make our efforts more coordinated and strategic."[30]

The bottom-line is that steps must be taken to follow through on these new initiatives. Adequate funding must be allocated, responsibilities assigned and the strategy implemented with the recognition that results may not be visible for years.

- *Win the War in Iraq.* The United States must succeed in Iraq. This war and the reshaping of a democratic Iraq have become a cornerstone in the war on Islamic extremism. As Bruce Hoffman from the Rand Corporation explained before Congress:

    Iraq has become a critical arena and test of America's strength and resolve. That a democratic, stable government takes root in Iraq, that the Iraqi people are united in having a stake in that outcome, and that security is achieved throughout the country have indisputably become the most important metrics not only for assessing success in Iraq, but inevitably now in the war on terrorism.[31]

    Our early withdrawal would once again serve as another catalytic event to further the extremist cause. It would be seen in the same light as the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan.

- *Resolve Detainee Status Issues.* One element that will assist in changing U.S. perceptions in the Arab and Muslim world is defining and determining the legal status of U.S.-held detainees at Guantanamo Bay and other locations. Until we make a determination as to their legal status and outcome, our indefinite holding of these individuals will continue to damage how we are perceived around the world.

- *End the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.* Resolving this crisis will not dissolve the threat of terrorism, "Bin Laden and al-Qaeda in fact took root and flowered in the late 1990's – precisely at a time when the Palestinian-Israeli relations were at their zenith as a result of the Oslo Accords,"[32] but the continued conflict is a key process in the rise of Islamic radicalism. If we reengage with a determination to find an equitable solution for both parties, it will go a long way in changing Muslim attitudes.

- *Choke Terrorist Financing.* There have been many successes curtailing the means by which terrorists finance their operations; nonetheless, emphasis needs to be placed on the processes we use to deliver anti-terrorist financing support to nations assisting us. The effort involves the participation of multiple agencies such as the Department of Treasury, Department of State, Department of Justice and Department of Defense. As of October 2005 it was determined:

    The U.S. government lacks an integrated strategy to coordinate the delivery of counter-terrorism financing, training and technical assistance to countries it deems vulnerable to terrorist financing. Specifically, the effort does not have key stakeholder acceptance of roles and procedures, a strategic alignment of resources with needs, or a process to measure performance.[33]

    So, as with other efforts, such as public diplomacy, this failure to coordinate impacts the effectiveness of this important long-term goal as stated in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* .

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- *Optimize Government Efforts.* As shown, many efforts are not coordinated properly, responsibilities are vague and our government bureaucracy slows our response and actions. A complete review should be undertaken to identify what is working well and what needs to be fixed or eliminated. A multitude of governmental reviews are taking place, but they are piecemeal and not tied to the overarching objectives and goals of the various strategies. Something akin to a Combating Terrorism Commission should be established to assess our performance. Establishing this group would be a logical successor to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States established following September 11.

- *Partnering With Moderates.* We must partner with moderate Muslim governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), and moderate religious leaders to promote accepted values such as democracy, non-violence, religious freedom and economic development. This will serve as another means to win the war of ideas. This is different than the public diplomacy effort noted earlier, which will often just be seen as propaganda by the United States. To effectively partner with these nations and organizations we must be at times totally transparent in our aid and at other times visibly show our support.

- *Exploit Opportunities.* Two recent events, the Indonesian tsunami and the earthquake in Pakistan, provided an immense opportunity for us to demonstrate our goodwill in the Muslim world. These events, as terrible as they were to human life, give us a unique chance to assist in regions of the world where we do not have significant interaction with the general Muslim population. Following our aid in these two disasters, polls showed positive perceptions of the U.S. rose significantly. We must develop the flexibility to rapidly respond to events, positive or negative, around the Muslim world to demonstrate the true American spirit and breakdown the negative stereotypes of Americans that have been promoted by those who aim to demonize the West.

- *Fortress Europe.* European nations, notably France, Great Britain, Spain and Germany must promote internal policies that serve to better integrate their large Muslim immigrants and citizens into society. Unlike, in the U.S., migration of Muslims into these countries is the largest source of immigration, both legally and illegally. [34] If governmental policies and societal norms are not adapted, the events experienced in France in November 2005 could easily overflow to other European nations.

- *Fight Intolerance.* Ensure Muslim elements are not alienated in non-Muslim nations. Pass legislation that reinforces American ideals to ensure discrimination is not tolerated. Uphold the values Western Nations espouse: freedom of religion and speech.

In the art of war there are no fixed rules

—Sun Tzu[35]

Conclusion

The war on Islamic extremism is far from being won. In fact, the odds that there will be another catastrophic terrorist attack on the United States, like September 11, is just a matter of time unless we as a nation make significant changes in prosecuting the war. Government leader's measure success in this war on terror by highlighting the number of days since September 11 that we have not experienced another attack or by announcing a headcount of terrorists killed. This serves only to lull us into a sense of false security.

Many experts have offered their thoughts on how to move forward. Some ideas are not new, but others offer important shifts to our strategies. The challenge is to be critical with an honest evaluation and ensure our efforts are balanced among all our strengths and weaknesses.

Finding this balance of effort among all sources of power is the essential element for Sun Tzu. His theories covered the spectrum from tactical to strategic, diplomatic to economic. This is why, after so many centuries, Sun Tzu is still taught in military institutions and business schools, and quoted by so many. He understood the complex nature of war and that with any complex problem the solution is often found by combining and synchronizing multiple elements. As the world environment continues to dynamically change, Sun Tzu's theories will have even greater value, encouraging us to understand our environment, our own social, political and economic circumstances and recognizing how these factors impact others.

Endnotes

[1] Michael I. Handel, *Sun Tzu and Clausewitz Compared*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 1991), 69.

[2] James Clavell, *The Art of War*, (New York: Delacorte Press, 1983), 3.

[3] Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Complete Art of War: Sun Tzu*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 8-10. In this work, Sawyer notes that despite the incessant warfare of the period, it was an era

of remarkable intellectual ferment as the often beleaguered rulers vigorously struggled to unify their states, impose central control, and establish the material prosperity necessary to sustain prolonged military campaigns. Many viewpoints were espoused, though they mostly focused on employing capable people, creating effective administrations, improving agriculture and expanding the military through better organization, training, and selection.

[4] Clavell, 9.

[5] Sawyer, 48.

[6] Sawyer, 15-36. Sawyer does yeoman's work breaking down the essential elements of Sun Tzu's principles and distilling them into these four themes. I challenged his four themes against two different translations of Sun Tzu's work: Samuel B. Griffin, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) and James Clavell's work and in addition used Michael I. Handel's *Master's of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1996) to determine Sawyer's themes were accurate and useful for conciseness.

[7] It is difficult to discern the differences between Sawyer's final theme of Tactical Principles and the others. I would have placed the elements of his tactical principles under the main theme of Fundamentals.

[8] Ibid., 84.

[9] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," available from http://www.odni.gov/release letter 101105/; Internet; accessed 11 October 2005.

[10] Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 4.

[11] Century Foundation Task Force Report, *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2004), 12-13.

[12] Bruce Hoffman, *Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 3-4.

[13] Century Foundation Task Force Report, 16-18.

[14] Ibid., 17.

[15] Angel M. Rabasa et al., *The Muslim World after 9/11*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004), 36-37.

[16] Ibid., 37.

[17] Christopher M. Blanchard, *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya*, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2005), 1-5. "Wahhabism" generally refers to a movement that seeks to purify the Islamic religion of any innovations or practices that deviate from the seventh-century teachings of the prophet Muhammad. In the West, the term has been used mostly to denote the form of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia and which has spread recently to various parts of the world.

[18] Griffith, 77.

[19] President George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2003), 6.

[20] President George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* , (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2003), 2.

[21] Ibid., 12.

[22] John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya – The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer*, (London: Harrap, 1985), 262.

[23] Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterrorism: A Component in the War on al-Qaeda*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2002), 31-32.

[24] Bruce Hoffman, *Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?*, (California: Rand Corporation, 2005), 15-16. This paper was presented by the author as testimony before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation on 29 September, 2005.

[25] Government Accounting Office, *Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism* , (Washington, D.C.: GAO, 2004), 3.

[26] Ibid., 101.

[27] Government Accounting Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy*, (Washington, D.C.: GAO, April 2005), 1.

[28] Ibid., 1.

[29] Harold C. Pachios , "Communicating Public Diplomacy Objectives," 10 February 2004, available from http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/state/29213/; Internet; accessed 16 November 2005.

[30] Karen Hughes, "Testimony at Confirmation Hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," 22 July 2005; available from http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/49967/; Internet; accessed 16 November 2005.

[31] Hoffman, 17.

[32] Hoffman, 20.

[33] Government Accounting Office, *Terrorist Financing: Better Strategic Planning Needed to Coordinate U.S. Efforts to Deliver Counter-Terrorism Financing Training and Technical Assistance Abroad*, (Washington, D.C.: GAO, October 2005), 3.

[34] Oliver Roy, "Europe's Response to Radical Islam," *Current History*, (November 2005): 363.

[35] Handel, 8.